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AN APPEAL TO ALL MEN OF COMMON SENSE.

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BEING

An ANSWER

TO

JOHN HELTON'S

LETTER TO A FRIEND.

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By JOHN FENWICK, late Farmer.

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FRIEND JOHN,

WEIGHING your Comments on the  
W Scriptures, in your Letter to your  
Friend, I could not but observe, that  
you either designedly or ignorantly  
misapply many precious texts. This you do  
from a new Light you have lately received,  
which to me appears gross Darknefs.

You quote John xvi. 13, "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." And hence infer, that the Scripture is not the only touchstone of truth. p. 8. Pray then, by what rule will you try the Spirit, whether it be of God? You must admit the Scripture to be the only rule to try our spirits by, or you must leave every man to follow his own imagination. There is but this alterna-



time? Either the Scripture is the rule to try all our spirits by; or every man must follow his own fancy.

But you quote John xiv. 26. "The Comforter whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things." p. 11. You add, "This exactly corresponds with 1 John ii. 27. "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye need not that any man teach you." Surely you must see this cannot be taken literally, or you overturn the Apostle's own argument. For if we are to understand it without any limitation, there was no need of St. John's either preaching or writing!

You add, "This is a glorious truth, which when experimentally known, will lead us into the highest estimation of the Scripture." Very true: but does not the Lord usually bring us to the knowledge of this glorious truth, by the preaching of his Word? Was not *You* brought to this knowledge of the Spirit of Jesus, by hearing his word preached? And did not you then try your spirit, whether it was of God, by the word of his testimony? Yea, "to the law and the testimony" we must all appeal, and stand to them, or there is no real light in us.

But how amazing is your next remark! "I know not any Society of Christians, except the people called Quakers, that bears a full testimony to the doctrine of divine Inspiration." Surely then you have forgot how you was purged from your former sins! For did not *You* receive that Inspiration, when you received remission of sins, among the people called Methodists? Did you not fully testify it to others when you had received it, first at *Cork*, and in divers



divers parts of *Ireland*, then in many parts of *England*, and afterwards in *Scotland*, whence you wrote to Mr. *Wesley*, "That you had been a greater blessing to the people there, than any that had ever gone before you?" This Letter I not only saw; but answered, reproving you for the high opinion you had of yourself, and for speaking so disrespectfully of many worthy men, that had been called of God, long before you was called out of *Egypt*. But now you not only contradict all your former Experience, but are so blind as to think a dumb spirit, even in public Assemblies has been your calling for many months! And thus it is, that you bear a full testimony to the doctrine of Divine Inspiration!"

You tell us, p. 25, "Several have acknowledged, they had attempted to preach, when they had a clear sense of being unqualified for the work: and bewailed the necessity they were under of acting contrary to their own judgment." And you add, "This I believe, (for I speak by Experience) must frequently be the case with well-meaning men, who fit or unfit, preach at stated times."

I believe you misrepresent both your brethren and yourself. I take what you call "your own Experience," to be no other than the vapours in your head: for I have a better opinion of your heart, than to think you could be guilty of so base an action (which surely no well-meaning man could be guilty of!) as to "act contrary to your own Judgment," in a matter of so deep importance. As to the Necessity you speak of, I am persuaded none ever desired you to preach contrary to your own judgment, except it were some well-meaning old wife, or good-natured young Lady.

If any man be called of God to preach, he feels his own utter insufficiency for the work : And often, a very strong reluctance. Yet his Judgment tells him, he ought to obey God : Not " fit or unfit : " for God calls no one to this work, whom he doth not make fit for it. If afterwards he is at any time unfit for it, he has made himself so, by trifling with God.

But you tell us of others, " who feel no want of, and therefore do not wait for, the Divine aid." If there are such, I wish they and you may be silent, till that aid is given you.

P. 26. You give us part of Solomon's advice, " Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God." Why did you not add the other part ? " And be more ready to hear, than to offer the sacrifice of fools." Eccles. v. 2. But who, suppose him ever so " ready to hear," can hear a dumb Preacher ?

You add, " Be not rash with thy mouth and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God." A just reproof of those Preachers, who, like Nadab and Abihu, offer strange fire before the Lord. But does not the Prophet give as just a reproof to those Preachers, who are *dumb dogs, and cannot bark* ?

P. 37, You blame your friend for affirming, " there is neither Command nor Example in Scripture, for *silent waiting* in a Public Assembly." Certainly there is not : If none present were called to preach, St. Paul directs them to sing and pray ; not be silent. But you affirm, on the other hand, " there is neither Command nor Example in Scripture, for Singing-men or Organs." I grant it : let them go : I have nothing to do with them. — " Or Liturgies " — Hold ! Stop, friend John ! What do you mean by Liturgies ? Forms of Prayer ? Then certainly

tainly our Lord's prayer is one. And this we are expressly commanded to use. Himself says, not only, *After this manner pray ye* : but, *When ye pray, say*.—

And is there no Example of Singing in Scripture? Do not you remember the example of our LORD himself, singing the Hymn with his Disciples in the Mount of Olives? Do not you remember the example of Paul and Silas, singing even in the prison? Do not you remember Paul's own words, "I will sing with the Spirit : I will sing with the understanding also?" Nay, we have not only Example, but an express Command given by the same Apostle (Col. iii. 16), Let the word of God dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching one another in psalms and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto the Lord?"

Afterwards you largely plead for *Silent waiting upon God* in the public Assembly. And did our Lord mean, when he commanded Peter to feed his sheep, that he should feed them by his Silence? Or did Paul mean, that Timothy should be silent, when he directed him to "be instant, in season out of season?" Was it by Silence, that all the Churches were to "exhort one another, and provoke one another to love and good works?" And if Paul greatly condemns "speaking to the Congregation in an unknown tongue, except there be some to interpret their words ; would he not at least equally have condemned all silent Preachers, except there were some to interpret their silence? For who can understand a *dumb* Preacher, any more than one who speaks in an unknown tongue?

"But ought we not to *wait upon God*?" Undoubtedly we ought : Preachers in particular.



lar. A public Preacher, called of God by his Spirit, if he be led by him, waits upon God not only in the preaching-house, but much more in his closet. Yea, he waits upon God, wherever he is, and whatever he is about. Therefore he is always prepared to be a mouth for the Lord to the people, and for the people to God in Prayer.

And I appeal to your own Conscience (if it is not as dumb as your tongue has lately been in the public Assembly) how can you see giddy young people before you, and grey-headed sinners about you, and not warn either one or the other to flee from the wrath to come? Nay, nor even open your mouth in prayer, for those who are dropping into the pit? Instead of this, you sit humming and hawing, you and your friends, as if the Lord had forsaken you all!

But you "confess, to natural, and some called spiritual men, it appears foolishness to see a congregation waiting on God in silence." P. 30. Truly, there is no set of people, except the Quakers, to whom it does not appear foolishness: And are all these natural men? And only *called* spiritual men? You yourself for many years thought this to be foolishness: Was *You* all the time a natural man?

P. 32. You say, "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and as the Spirit gave them utterance." Then these silent Preachers are not moved by the Holy Ghost: for the Spirit gives them no utterance.

But you will shew us what Preachers were called to preach. First, "Their discourses were not premeditated. They delivered what was immediately given them from the Lord: for which you cite, 1 John i. 2, 3; What we have seen with our eyes and heard with our ears, declare

declare we unto you. And truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ." Nay, this text proves rather, that St. John did premeditate, and that he was now delivering to them, what himself, as well as Peter and James, had been long meditating upon.

You next quote Psalm 39. But if this proves any thing, it proves that we ought to premeditate, that we ought to wait upon the Lord in our closet, in deep meditation, that we may be prepared to speak, when we come into the Congregation.

Your second Proof is, "As they prophesied one by one, there must have been some silence, to prevent two speaking at once." One did not speak till the other had done. But how much silence does this imply?

You say, thirdly, "The present mode of one man's speaking for an hour together, without admitting others to speak, was not known among the first ministers of the gospel." Nay, did not Paul at Ephesus continue speaking till midnight, without admitting any other to speak? And so did many of the primitive Ministers, when they spent whole nights in Preaching, and prayer, and praise.

So far then is the practice of the people called Quakers, from agreeing with the practice of the primitive ministers, that they are just contrary thereto, in all these three particulars.

P. 33. You suppose it quite absurd, for "an Apostle to be conning over old books, picking out a sentence here and there, committing them to his memory, and then retailing them to his auditory." Yet St. Paul himself has done something very like this. He committed to his memory what he had read in an old book, and retailed it to his auditory at Athens, in the  
close

close of a most solemn Discourse. And even this discourse was attended with a very remarkable blessing?

An unusual blessing attended a discourse of Mr. Flavel, which he delivered after his having waited upon God in his closet much longer time than he was accustomed to do. And if your Teachers would thus wait upon God in secret, they would not be as dumb dogs, when they appear in public before those who are assembled on purpose to hear the Word of the Lord from their mouth.

But will *John Helton*, above all men find fault with our conning over old books, when he has over and over done the same thing, in this very Letter? You give us an account of your conning over Barclay's Apology, as the reason why you left the Methodists. And in your Letter you shew you have conned over Church-History, Mr. Henry, and Archbishop Tillotson. You give us an account of Roman History, p. 52; of Saxon History, p. 54. If then it be absurd to retail to a particular congregation what we have picked up from old Commentators; is it not much more absurd, to retail to all the world, what you have been so long picking up?

You next quote Matt. x. 19, "Take no thought what things ye shall say. For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour, what ye shall say. And does this prove, that we ought not to meditate before we preach? Surely you cannot but see, that our Lord is speaking here, of their being brought before Magistrates. In this case they needed not take any thought before hand, what to say; but to rely on him who would at that time and place give them such answers as should confound their adversaries.

But



But what has this to do with the Public Ministry of the word? With regard to this we are taught of God, "Take heed unto thyself and to thy doctrine:" Yea, "hold fast the form of sound words." "Give thyself to reading:" "Meditate on these things: give thyself wholly to them." "Study to shew yourselves approved before God, workmen that need not be ashamed."

Again you quote, Matt. xxviii. 30. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world," and add, "We should live in a continual dependance on the Lord, speaking from the ability which God giveth." True: but does this prove, that they are not to speak at all? Nay: Speak according to the ability which God giveth you. If he give you no ability at all, it is plain He has not called you to the Ministry.

The truth is, most of them take so little thought (by prayer and supplication to the Lord) what they should say, that frequently they have nothing to say, when they appear before the Lord in public.

Against Baptism you quote Acts xi. 14. "And as I began to preach, the Holy Ghost fell on them. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." But do not we read in the preceding chapter, concerning these very persons, "Then said Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost, even as we? Here St. Peter urges, Because they are baptized with the Holy Ghost, they ought the rather to be baptized with water.

But

But you tell us, "There is no divine precept for Water-Baptism." Have you then never read John iii. 22, 23, 26? It is true, "Jesus baptized not, but his disciples." But did he not command them so to do? And was not this Water-Baptism? Here then is clear, full, incontestable proof that He commanded Water-Baptism.

As to your dispute about what you call the plain language, I defy you or any man living to prove, that *Thou* is one yet plainer than *You*, whether it is better English or no. True plain language is that which agrees with the heart. And this alone is worth contending for.

As you are so out of love with Soldiers and fighting, I wish you could prevail upon the Congress, with their faithful disinterested Allies, the French, to learn war no more. But if you cannot do this, and if you will yourself neither preach nor defend your country, I pray do not persuade our Preachers, not to speak, or our Soldiers, not to fight. For as long as Satan is the prince of this world, we shall undoubtedly have great occasion, both of Soldiers to repel the men that delight in war, and of Preachers to cry aloud and spare not.

Wishing you at least to fight the good fight of faith, I remain,

Dear John,

Your affectionate Friend,

JOHN FENWICK.



